



FOUNDATION FOR FAIR CONTRACTING OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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HB 5291 Testimony:

Senator Prague, Rep Zalaski and members of the committee thank you so much for holding a hearing on House Bill 5291.

The Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut fully supports House Bill 5291 and our organization is urging you to vote yes on this crucial piece of legislation.

The Foundation for Fair Contracting is a not-for-profit labor management organization which represents both contractors and workers. We monitor public construction projects to make sure that the contractors and workers are in compliance with Connecticut's labor laws. We pull certified payrolls to check for misclassifications, licensing issues and wage violations.

What we find more often than not is, in cases where the prevailing wage law does not apply, workers are generally paid the minimum wage, or close to it. Specific to the Construction industry, our skilled workers have been through three or four year apprenticeship programs. We are going to have a pretty tough time enrolling people into apprenticeship programs when we are turning the construction industry into poverty level, minimum wage jobs. I cannot stress enough that when the prevailing wage does not apply, the minimum wage does apply.

Connecticut's construction industry is suffering unemployment at a staggering rate of anywhere from 40-50%. And households with a construction worker on the bench are relying more than ever on wages of a diner waitress or a home health aide to make ends meet. The jobs lost during the recession are disproportionately in mid-wage occupations like manufacturing and construction, while those that are now growing are concentrated in low-wage fields like restaurants, retail and home health care.

The current minimum wage in Connecticut is \$8.25. That equates to \$17,160 a year. Therefore, a minimum wage worker is about \$1,000 below the poverty line for a family with two children.

We need to aide our ailing workforce. We need to create demand and standards. We need to break the cycle of poverty. Therefore, I am urging the committee to vote YES on House Bill 5291.